

**TESTIMONY OF**

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**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SPACE**

**OF THE**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND  
TRANSPORTATION**

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Ken Burris, and I am the Chief Operating Officer, and currently Acting Administrator, of the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Joe Allbaugh. We are gathered here today to discuss how to improve the preparedness and effectiveness and safety of our first responders. And also to explore how we can work together for the good of the fire service and the public they serve.

But before I begin, I want to commend to the efforts of those firefighters who responded to this tragedy. While it is right that we pay tribute to those who were lost, there is no doubt that the toll would have been much higher were it not for the heroic efforts of our firefighters. Thousands of lives were lost but thousands of others, indeed tens of thousands, were saved through preparedness, and quick response by these firefighters.

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have shown our Nation the importance of its fire services. A service that was once taken for granted is now being viewed as an essential component of the public safety equation. The fire departments of the City of New York, the City of Arlington, VA and Shanksville, PA has proven that our first responders will be called to respond across urban, suburban and rural communities of our country. Fire departments of every type: career, volunteer and combination across our nation must be vigilant to heed the call to service at a moments notice.

This is a familiar state of readiness for the fire service. The same state of readiness that is required to respond to a community's normal threat risk, with the difference being the magnitude of the event and the subsequent operational requirements. My experience in New York paralleled my experiences in other operational conditions that overwhelm a local jurisdictions ability to respond.

I have read the after action reports on previous larger scale emergency operations; hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, fires. The very challenges that were faced in the response to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> are the same challenges the fire service and emergency management community face in response to all hazards.

The fire services suffered a terrible blow that day and we all mourn for those lost. We also saw the best of the fire services that day and in the weeks that have followed. Perhaps for the first time, the nation has witnessed live and on television an example of heroism that is practiced by the fire services of this nation in countless smaller incidents every day.

Last year I participated in a hearing with Noreen Lucey, the sister on one of our fallen heroes from the tragic Worcester, Massachusetts fire. She talked a bit about the selfless response of the six firefighter who gave their life to that blaze and summed up their reasons for doing so.

She said quite simply: “That’s just what they do.”

I also want to thank the committee for your concern, your support and your understanding of the need to recognize the fire services contribution to public safety and their future needs. At the United States Fire Administration, we have been working to develop and deliver training and educational programs to the fire services on terrorism awareness and response. Many fire departments across the nation are asking themselves, “are we prepared for this” or “how on earth are we ever going to handle something like this”. Both of these are good questions, but many other departments are saying just the opposite; they think, “it will never happen here”. Make no mistake that the message every fire department in America should have gotten is that we are all vulnerable to the effects of another terrorist attack.

## TRAINING

The United States Fire Administration’s National Fire Academy has terrorism programs that range from self-study courses you can take in your home as well as university programs for government leaders.

A very popular introductory course is available both in paper format and as a file downloadable from the USFA Web Site. *Emergency Response to Terrorism: Self-Study (ERT:SS) (Q534)* is a self-paced, paper-based document and is designed to provide the basic awareness training to prepare first responders to respond to incidents of terrorism safely and effectively. Students who successfully complete the exam will be eligible for a FEMA/BJA certificate of training. The course is designed for fire, emergency medical, HAZMAT, incident command and law enforcement responders. The *ERT:SS* course may be downloaded in portable document format (PDF). You may also request a copy of the *ERT:SS* through the USFA Publications Center at (800) 238-3358, ext. 1189 or order it online.

Thousands of emergency responders across the country have taken *Emergency Response to Terrorism: Basic Concepts*, a two-day course designed to prepare them to take the appropriate course of action at the scene of a potential terrorist incident. The course provides students with a general understanding and recognition of terrorism, defensive considerations (biological, nuclear, incendiary, chemical, and explosive), as well as command and control issues associated with criminal incidents. When an incident occurs, the student will be able to recognize and implement self-protective measures, secure the scene, complete appropriate notifications to local, State, and Federal authorities, and assist in completing a smooth transition from emergency to recovery and termination operations.

The primary target audience for this training includes hazardous materials, fire, and emergency medical services first responder personnel. The secondary audience includes law enforcement personnel, emergency communications personnel, jurisdiction emergency coordinators, public works managers, and public health providers. The USFA provides grants to State fire service training systems so this training can be available to you locally, at little or no cost. Often, in small communities, fire, EMS and law enforcement responders sit in the same class and can

become familiar with each other's responsibilities and procedures.

*Emergency Response to Terrorism: Tactical Considerations – Company Officer (ERT:TC-CO)*, is a two-day course designed to build upon the existing skills of the initial first-responding supervisor from the *Emergency Response to Terrorism: Basic Concepts* course or *Emergency Response to Terrorism: Self-Study* guide. The students will be trained in security considerations, identifying signs of terrorism, anticipating unusual response circumstances, assessing information, and initiating self-protection actions.

Anyone who could serve as the first on-the-scene officer in a hazardous material or emergency medical services incident would benefit from this course. You must have a working knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS). Students will not be taught ICS but will be expected to use ICS during class activities.

*Emergency Response to Terrorism: Tactical Consideration – Emergency Medical Service (ERT:TC-EMS)* is a two-day course is designed for the first on-the-scene responding EMS personnel with the responsibility to render patient care to victims of terrorist incidents. The students will be trained in security considerations, identifying signs of terrorism, anticipating unusual response circumstances, assessing information, and initiating self-protection actions. The students also will apply their knowledge about responding to a terrorist event, providing patient care, identifying and preserving evidence, managing site safety, documenting the event, and debriefing personnel.

The target audience for *ERT:TC-EMS* is first on-the-scene emergency medical services personnel, who could be career and/or volunteer firefighters, EMS, industrial contractors, allied health personnel, and members of the military or other Government agencies. Note: The medical protocols for rendering patient care are at the Advanced Life Support (ALS) level.

Another two-day course is designed for the first on-the-scene responding hazardous materials technician or persons who have the responsibility of developing initial hazardous materials tactical considerations. In *Emergency Response to Terrorism: Tactical Considerations – Hazardous Materials (ERT:TC-HM)* the students will be trained in security considerations, identifying signs of terrorism, anticipating unusual response circumstances, assessing information, and initiating self-protection actions. The students also will apply their knowledge about responding to a terrorist event, managing site safety, documenting the event, and debriefing personnel.

*ERT:TC-HM* is targeted at first on-the-scene hazardous materials technician-level personnel, who could be career and/or volunteer firefighters, EMS, industrial contractors, allied health personnel, and members of the military or other Government agencies with hazardous materials responsibility.

It is important to remember that all of the above courses are two days in length and are part of

the National Fire Academy's Direct Delivery Program. That means that they can be delivered in or near any community. Moreover, they can be funded either through the Terrorism Training Grants or State Fire Training Grants, so the cost to departments should be minimal.

Another "plus" in this training is that the ERT series of courses have been evaluated by the American Council on Education and have been recommended for one semester hour credit each in AAS - Fire Science or EMS Technologies. If you are enrolled in a degree program, your institution may allow you credit for these courses. The entire National Fire Academy course catalog is available on line and can be found at [www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa).

These courses address what we are doing now. Where we need to go in the future is the question. As we see it, all levels of government and the fire services community have several issues to address, both internally and externally. First let me address some of these needs and trends.

#### COORDINATION AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

The FEMA mission is to reduce the loss of life and property and protect our nation's critical infrastructure from all types of hazards. As staffing goes, we are a small agency. Our success depends on our ability to organize and lead a community of local, State, and Federal agencies and volunteer organizations. We know who to bring to the table and what questions to ask when it comes to the business of managing emergencies. We provide an operation framework and a funding source.

The Federal Response Plan (FRP) is the heart of that framework. It reflects the labors of interagency groups that meet as required in Washington, D.C. and all 10 FEMA Regions to develop our capabilities to respond as a team. This team is made up of 2 Federal departments and Agencies and the American Red Cross, and organized into interagency functions based on the authorities and expertise of the members and the needs of our counterparts at the state and local level.

While USFA has seen the effectiveness among and within the Federal family, we must acknowledge that the fire services at the local level have had limited training to respond to terrorist incidents. The primary focus of the federal effort to date in delivering this training needs to be better coordinated. USFA, working with the FEMA Office of National Preparedness, should include senior fire services leadership in the coordination of fire and emergency services response planning effort to these catastrophic events.

The fire departments across the nation need to be an integral part of the planning, training and policy development for terrorism preparedness. While there is a general acknowledgement that the law enforcement community has a significant deterrence and investigatory role, it is also true that the fire services are the first on the scene, and therefore the first at risk. Any future considerations on training and funding for equipment must take this into account.

## ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT PROGRAM

Since the attacks, the Senate has passed the Defense Authorization bill with a three-year authorization of \$600 million, \$800 million and \$1 billion over the three years and the bill is currently in the conference committee. It is important that if this program were taken to its full authorized amount and continue, USFA will need authorization for salaries and expenses to administer and staff the program effectively. It is also important that the agency be given the authority to develop the program with greater flexibility.

As FEMA Director Allbaugh has stated, “firefighters are the first in line for budget cuts and the last in line for recognition. This must stop.” This program should not however replace the primary responsibility for funding and support, which lies with the local and state governments. Federal assistance should be supplemental and should be directed to the areas and programs in greatest need.

State and local support of the fire services must be increased and the federal role should be to foster that participation. Incentives to local governments need to be developed and enacted.

## STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS WITH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

It is increasingly clear that the cooperation between the emergency management community and the fire services needs to be strengthened and encouraged. While at the local level emergency managers are at many times the local fire chief, at higher levels there is a disconnect. Improved cooperation should include joint training development and delivery, cooperative agreements and the development of a statewide and perhaps nationwide mutual aid system. Resources directed for terrorism preparation should have a strong fire services component.

Quality, robust and consistent communications capabilities should be developed and implemented for the fire services. As a nation we need to strive to provide the communications infrastructure necessary for multiple agency communications. Currently there is no secure means to provide first responders with important, un-compromised information. Obviously, this void could severely hamper effective fire service operations in a terrorist environment.

Another communications need involves incident management and coordination. We have to communicate with all response and supporting agencies at every level of the Federal Response Plan, which is the framework for the federal support that they will need in terrorist events. It is important that all local fire and public safety agencies and their staffs are aware of the plan and how it meshes with their state, county and local planning. There should also be training and exercises to ensure understanding and ability to work within this structure.

We cannot manage incidents with entities that have unique or different incident command or incident management systems (ICS/IMS) or with those entities not operationally conversant with the standard incident management system. We need to work toward an institutionalized operating, common ICS/IMS throughout the country.

Incident management must address coordination issues with the Federal Response Plan. Self-deployment of agencies and assets outside the plan and the IMS request creates difficulty in coordination and strains the time and attention of legitimate responders. Standardized state and regional mutual/automatic aid plans would be helpful. Also, attention and training must include focus on the problems with maintenance of long-term “campaign” emergency operations that will go on for extended periods of time.

We need to address the area of scene security and safety. The WTC incident clearly demonstrated the need to explore a national credentialing system for first responders. Such a system could provide identification of the responder, the responder’s qualifications, and any operations limitations and expiration dates. State and local agencies and educational/training institutions should serve as the certifying authorities for qualifications. The certification “card” could then serve as a passport for admission to secured work sites. This should cut down on the “free lancing” we saw on scene in New York and result in improved security.

We need to consider additional training in vehicle/logistics/staging security, personnel security, scene security, control and accountability of teams and resources as well as issues of deployment, sustainability, and recall.

USFA and the States provide appropriate and adequate first responder training but we need to train more students. Training efforts should do more to “push” materials and skills towards the end user. This will necessitate the use of additional and non-traditional methods including technology oriented deliveries and more partnering with state and other training authorities.

We also need to consider delivering more leadership and strategic skills classes and deliver more training in integrated/area IMS operations. The issue of holistic community participation and benefit requires broad-spectrum participation among the attendees’ communities.

We also need to look toward research and development to provide community assistance to match threat level with resources available or obtainable in terms of protective gear. It is important to be able to quickly assess the threat environment that the fire services faces at an incident and be able to quickly provide the appropriate protection to them.

Building construction practices and code development must take a new look at the concept of “trade-offs” in buildings and evaluate the value of redundancies in building design and construction. It is important that we guard against “under designing” buildings with automatic fire suppression sprinkler systems by allowing “trade-offs” in other areas to include egress systems or fire rated construction.

We also need to provide a tool for the collection of asset/resource data to provide the region with accurate and timely data regarding resources available for deployment in the event of an

emergency. USFA is undertaking just such an effort with the first ever Fire Department Census. This will enable us, for the first time, to be able to quantify the amount of emergency equipment, apparatus and personnel that exist in the nation.

Working closely with FEMA and the Forest Service, USFA should explore the development of an enhanced National Overhead IMS response team as part of the Emergency Support Function 4 for the urban environment.

It will also be important for USFA to develop and promulgate courses/training dealing with large incident response "etiquette." Included in that training should be the issues of jurisdiction, self-dispatch, scene control, and inter-agency and inter-discipline relations.

USFA should also develop and increase the promulgation of Incident Management Systems through on-site courses, literature, multiple media off-site, and other means. While much effort has been made, more work is necessary. We will also be looking closely at the Executive Fire Officer curriculum to include attention to the issues particular to the loss of major portions of a fire departments senior command structure as well as issues specific to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Another WTC example is the threat of "secondary devices" which relates to scene security and safety. The second aircraft was unimaginable, yet it was also a secondary device on a greater scale. Part of the ongoing development of IMS training should include "ascension or succession" planning to deal with the possibility of loss of senior staff /command structure immediately prior to or during a disaster event.

As we all learn lessons from the tragedies in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania, lets not lose sight of the fact that as the community's first response organization, the fire service needs to work closely with police and other local officials. We need to determine what areas of our cities and towns could be targets, but we also need to plan for the unexpected event that goes beyond our ability to respond with just one community's resources. This type of planning and cooperation is critical to responding to and recovering from terrorist events.

As September 11 has demonstrated, the fire services are the first line of homeland defense and we owe it to the people we serve to be as prepared as possible.

On behalf of the entire staff of the United State Fire Administration and the fire services community and all of the leadership and staff at FEMA, I want to again thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to address any questions you might have.